

## letters

# to the Editor



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## Resident offended by trustees

Thanks to Mayor Mary Lowther and trustees Basil Piazza and Brian Kulpa for voting to approve my appointment to the Village of Williamsville Special Events Committee. I can think of nothing more rewarding than having the opportunity to volunteer my time for the betterment of our wonderful village.

I have never met Trustee Jeff Kingsley or Trustee Brian Geary personally, and I take issue with their assumed opinions. I have no "political agenda." During their failed attempt to block my appointment, they publicly voiced this inaccurate, erroneous statement regarding my purpose, hardly admirable behavior for our community leaders and policymakers.

I look forward to working with  
(Please turn to page six)

## Correction

The headline of the Williamsville East boys swimming article was incorrect in last week's Bee. Kane Hsieh won the 100-yard breaststroke at the ECIC "AA" Championships, not Neil Batta as reported.

# Federal tax refunds won't help address real fiscal problems

Time to take a break from the analysis of the ongoing presidential primaries and briefly touch on some topics that may or may not be making headlines as we enter the unofficial "winter blahs" portion of the calendar for all who live in Western New York:

While some folks are prematurely celebrating the arrival of their federal tax refund check, I can't help but wonder how many people can't see the big picture when it comes to the fiscal woes of our country.

Specifically, the federal budget for fiscal year 2009 is going to weigh in at about \$3.1 trillion. That's trillion with a "t."

Federal deficit spending is spinning completely out of control, thanks in large part to expenses related to military costs for the war in Iraq. Add to that a rising unemployment rate, increasing consumer debt, totally wacked-out foreign exchange rates, our free-falling dollar, a shaky stock market, skyrocketing costs associated with pension and retirement accounts and a mind-boggling forecast of around one million foreclosures for 2008 and we've got a real mess on our hands when it comes to our country's fiscal policies and procedures.

Simply sending out a \$600 check to every Tom, Dick and Harry is not going to solve the problem because that money is not going to "stimulate the economy" the way our federal officials think it will.

The mortgage defaults that began last year hurt both the average homeowner and the banks. We had more than half a million people watch their lives go down the toilet last year when they saw their homes get foreclosed, with the end result including some massive hits suffered by our banks, since those mortgages with the subprime high rates that our top financial institutions made hundreds of millions of dollars on, exploded, taking with it the nice white picket fence that so wonderfully decorated the front lawns of these one-time dream homes.

So when those \$600 checks arrive in the mail later this year, we'll all run to the store and buy a new iPod or recliner or tires for the car and all will be right with the world.

Yes indeed, the American economy is ready to be "economically stimulated" as we all whistle a

fun little tune, completely ignoring a fiscal meltdown of epic proportions.

Here's a quick item of interest that will likely have you thinking twice and turning off the light in a room once you exit stage left.

According to information obtained from the Business Council of New York, the cost of electricity here in the Empire State rose approximately 12 percent over a one-year period of time, nearly twice the national average cost increase.

Calculating those new numbers finds that New York's overall electricity costs are the nation's fourth highest, meaning the cost of turning on the juice is a whopping 66 percent above the national average.

I had to chuckle when I heard Erie County Democratic Chairman Len Lenihan mention in a radio interview not too long ago that, while on vacation, he found himself flipping on C-SPAN to watch what was sure to be some mind-numbing and extremely dull coverage of something only true die-hard, hardcore political junkies would get some sort of satisfaction from.

Hey, Len, it's called a vacation. Step directly away from the television set and head down to the pool. Stop off at the hotel bar for a margarita. Leave your BlackBerry, cell phone and pager in your suitcase.

Here's hoping Erie County Executive Chris Collins decides to support the idea of constructing a new convention center for downtown Buffalo.

An idea that was fully supported by Dennis Gorski when he was the region's top elected official, the concept of abandoning the current building and erecting a new state-of-the-art facility was basically ignored by Joel Giambra during the eight years he was in office as the county's head honcho.

Collins needs to get behind this quest. Conventions bring people and money to town. We need that. Badly.

(Daniel Meyer is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers of Western New York. Comments on this column can be e-mailed to: meyersmusings@gmail.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)



DAN MEYER

Political Columnist

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You said:

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## Senate measures help make safer Internet

The Internet is a tremendous resource that has greatly increased our access to education and information. Unfortunately, as illustrated in recent local cases, sexual predators have made the Internet a potentially dangerous tool that can be used to victimize innocent children.

In addition, to holding a recent hearing on the topic at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library, the Senate has introduced several measures to help combat these predators.

The new and comprehensive Electronic Security and Targeting of Online Predators Act (e-STOP), establishes vital protections against sexual predators so users of the Internet — especially children — can more safely surf the Web. The legislation will restrict certain sex offenders' use of the Internet and updates Megan's Law for the Internet age.

The Internet and popular social networking sites are used by many young people and, disturbingly, many sexual predators. The e-STOP initiative will ensure greater protections for kids, more control for parents and more tools for law enforcement to better police the Internet and protect people from being victimized.

Current laws do not provide enough protection for our children and fail to keep sexual offenders from misusing the Internet. Unfortunately, recent investigations have found that social networking sites have become an easy way for sexual predators to prey upon our children.

Should e-STOP become law, sex offenders would be required to register their online identifiers, and the social networking sites could then

use that information to ban sexual predators.

In addition to e-STOP, two bills that I sponsor aimed at protecting children recently passed the Senate.

The first is intended to protect children from predators who attempt to lure or entice them by means of a computer. Current law does not address the harassment of a child via a computer.

As children increasingly use computers for a variety of reasons, all too often they are monitored by predators who use the Internet to initiate sexual encounters.

In one particular case that received national attention, a child's neighbor posted her name and telephone number on a Web site for others to solicit sex from her. My bill makes this crime a serious offense — a class D felony.

Another bill I sponsor addresses a situation that occurred in Western New York a few years ago when a man abused a 9-year-old girl, broadcast it on the Internet, and encouraged those

viewing to make suggestions on what actions he should take.

Although the man who initiated the crime was arrested, those who watched and made online suggestions are just as guilty by actively participating. In the bill, a person would be guilty of a class D felony if he or she knowingly encourages or aids one or more persons to engage in a sex offense.

Protecting our children is one of our most important responsibilities.

These Senate measures represent a comprehensive approach to helping prevent crimes against children and punishing those who prey upon them.



MARY LOU RATH

New York State Senator